



News Release

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Idaho and Washington agree on water management protocols

SPOKANE – The Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) and the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) have put the finishing touches on an agreement that will guide how the two states will continue to coordinate with each other about water supply issues in the face of unprecedented growth on top of the Rathdrum Prairie-Spokane Valley aquifer.

IDWR and Ecology's water resources programs administer water rights and make determinations about water availability in their respective states. The aquifer serves more than 500,000 residents in portions of Spokane County, Washington and Bonner and Kootenai counties in Idaho.

The agreement details the continued coordination involving the maintenance and improvement of the technical tools developed in a bi-state water study. The comprehensive Idaho-Washington-U.S. Geological Survey study of the bi-state aquifer that was completed last year resulted in a numerical computer model that represents the best current knowledge of the groundwater flow system and how the aquifer interacts with the Spokane River in both states.

The computer model allows for water managers to enter data about a proposed withdrawal and see just how it would affect water levels in the vicinity of the withdrawal. With this tool the water managers can make well informed decisions about water use.

The new Memorandum of Agreement establishes a collaborative "modeling committee" of experts from both sides of the border to manage and secure the computer model and make sure that any updates are agreed upon by both states. The committee will decide what enhancements to the model would be valuable and establish the direction in which research should go to enhance the model.

The agreement was signed by IDWR Director David Tuthill, and Ecology Director, Jay Manning.

The committee will establish protocols to make sure that the most recent version of the model is available to local government and the general public.

"This will be a transparent process to make the model available, while also securing its contents," said Guy Gregory, Ecology's aquifer study lead. "We're placed a lot of trust in IDWR and they've placed a lot of trust in us to make this work."

"This agreement frames a process for the continuation of the excellent Washington and Idaho cooperation in managing this important aquifer. An additional benefit of the aquifer

study has been the development of a close working relationship between Ecology and IDWR. It is important for those relationships to be built upon as we move forward with management decisions,” said David Tuthill, director of IDWR.

The modeling committee has two representatives from both states. The members will be looking for broad input from other agencies and organizations along the way and will develop mechanisms to make that happen. The committee will meet at least twice each year.

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